

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 are indicated as allowable. The applicant respectfully traverses the rejection of claims 7 and 8 as follows.

Claims 7 and 8 are rejected as being anticipated by Smedal (US 5 893 333).

Smedal describes the loading/unloading of petroleum products between a tanker and a submerged buoy. Shown in figure 4-6 is a tanker brought up to a buoy and a flexible hose is connected to the buoy for loading or unloading. This method is described for a tanker, which is a very different type of ship than the support vessel according to the invention, and the transported products are also very different. A support vessel cannot be loaded/unloaded by means of a buoy, as the load generally is not fluid but rather transported goods and cargo to for example a offshore platform.

Support vessels and tankers are constructed very differently and with different design goals, as they serve very different purposes and experience different environmental loads. A skilled person will not believe that methods for loading/unloading a tanker can be converted to methods for loading/unloading a support vessel. There are no descriptions or indications in Smedal to use the method for loading/unloading petroleum products between a tanker and a submerged buoy for other types of vessels and/or other types of products. A direct use of the method shown in Smedal will not work for other types of products that are not fluid, as the method describes a transfer through a flexible hose.

It is thus believed that the invention according to claims 7 and 8 is new and non-obvious in view of prior art.